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Approved For Release 2000/08/22 : CIA-RDP60-00346R000200050001-4

Chief, Geography Division

15 January 1957

Chief, Geographic Area

GR Editing

1. It has seemed to me that of the four major subjects of editing --

Grammar  
Organization  
Clarity of thought  
Conformance of content and presentation with  
objective desired --

we in the Geographic Area tend to be weak in the latter; or rather, editing being the rigid game that it is, weaker than what one might expect. I feel that this weakness is of special importance to us because of the injurious as well as beneficial effect which editing can have on writers. The task of stimulating conceptually accurate GR's or other self-designed projects is certainly not aided by any inflexibility in the editing to which the writer has become adjusted in his normal work. In other regards, too, much of our effectiveness depends on the writer's maturity of judgement and selectivity, which elements editing, in instances, can affect for the worse.

2. As a case in point, I should like to comment on some aspects of GR-141, The Baiton-Uda-Baskunchak Area. This report appears to be excellently researched, and the writers are to be commended for it. However, the presentation departs in several instances from what would seem to be good judgement and selectivity. These are as follows:

a. The unnumbered page headed "Air Photos" includes the statement: "No [REDACTED] material is available for the Area." In view of the uncertain sensitivity of this material, this seems indiscreet and unnecessary.

b. Page 1 -- The first paragraph strikes me a deadly pedantism. It duplicates the table of contents; delays the reader; denies him a concise, big-picture peg on which to hang the mass of fact that is to follow; and invites loss of reader attention. Isn't this the point of kick-off, not a session of "now, where were we?"

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c. Page 1, par. 3 -- I suggest that all material on the political-administrative changes should be in a footnote, or also moved to a subordinated position elsewhere. As placed, it would seem to undercut the highlighting of material more central to the paper's objective.

d. Page 2, Para. 1-3 -- An over-all summary seems most appropriate to a paper like this, but the first paragraph here could include a good deal more in the way of specifics. The whole "Introduction" might well be re-named "Summary" and these paragraphs enlarged to comprise the bulk of it.

e. Page 3, par. 1 -- While a tickler drawing the reader's attention to the appendix on Karpustin Yar is appropriate, I don't see that the paragraph as it stands has any reason for existence except as a footnote to or subordinated element of Appendix A itself. It is largely an apologia and, while useful as trade talk among researchers, does not fit the consumer to whom the paper is directed. Such statements as, "An intensive and time-consuming effort was made to gather such material" are burdensome.

f. Page 59, par. 3 -- "Despite an exhaustive search, little information could be found." See e., above.

g. Page 78, par. 2 -- "For information of this type, it is suggested that the Office of Scientific Intelligence be contacted." The necessity for this sentence is unclear. If such installations were included in the requirement as accepted from the requestor, we should coordinate with OSI to get the information; any security complications would be accommodated by a note referring to a separate report under preparation by OSI. If, however, the sentence is simply information thrown in gratuitously, it would seem that the recipients are worldly enough not to need it.

3. These points individually are of minor importance, but taken together they identify an area of weakness to which the editors, in particular, should be alert. I would appreciate your consideration of them as reflective of a problem which may need some attention.

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